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ALBERTA

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ANNUAL REPORT 1983

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS' OFFICE

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1983

ANNUAL REPORT

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
ALBERTA

513 Legislature Building
Edmonton, Alberta
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December, 1983

I was pleased to be asked to write the introductory letter for the 1983 Annual Report of the Government Members' Office. This Report provides a useful overview of the present status of the Office, and offers an indication of how it might develop in the future.

The Government Members' Office was created to assist Non-Cabinet, Government Members of the Legislative Assembly to carry out their legislative responsibilities. It is organized into two divisions - the Secretarial and Research Branches. There are currently twenty-nine employees on staff (a complete staff list is found on Page 2). Secretarial staff are hired on a project basis (for the life of a Legislature), and research staff are hired on a contract basis, renewable annually. All staff are considered to be employees of the Legislative Assembly, and separate from the Party organization.

The past year ending December 31, 1983, was a year of considerable challenge and change for Government Members and their staff. Our new Members have had to familiarize themselves with the Legislature and the services offered by the Government Members' Office. All Members have had to assess the new economic and social challenges facing Alberta in an era of soft demand for our natural resources. In coming to grips with these challenges, we have been fortunate in being able to depend on the co-operation and professionalism of our employees.

Over the next year, it seems likely that we will see greater use made of new office technologies in word processing, information retrieval, and data manipulation. It also seems likely that the need to exercise restraint will have to be balanced with the need to maintain quality services to Members. I am confident that both Members and staff will continue to work together to meet the challenges and opportunities of 1984.

Sincerely,

Ian C. Reid, M.L.A.
Party Whip

STAFF - GOVERNMENT MEMBERS' OFFICE (as at December 31, 1983)

SECRETARIAL BRANCH

Margaret Pratt	Administrative Officer
Sylvia Ainslie	Secretary
Cathy Finlayson	Secretary
Cecilia Gibson	Secretary
Pat Harrison	Secretary
Debbie Hayman	Secretary
Barbara Jones-Graham	Secretary
Jad Kalke	Secretary
Karoline Kiddine	Secretary
Sharon Kozak	Secretary
Irene Kramar	Secretary
Susan Purdie	Secretary
Lynda Reith	Secretary
Verona Seenum	Secretary
Vijay Sharma	Secretary
Megan Stearns	Senior Office Assistant
Leslie Tucker	Secretary/Switchboard-Receptionist
Vonnie Whiting	Secretary
Susan Young	Secretary

RESEARCH BRANCH

Don Watson	Administrator
Laurie Collins	Researcher
Raymond Conway	Researcher
Lynn Jackson	Researcher
Janet Kelly Harding	Researcher
Heather Klimchuk	Researcher
Richard McHutchion	Researcher
Gwen Sanderson	Secretary
Rod Scarlett	Researcher
Sheila Williams	Researcher

SECRETARIAL BRANCH REVIEW

In 1983, in addition to the permanent Administrative Officer and the Switchboard-Receptionist, our project secretarial staff comprised sixteen full-time secretaries. We also have one full-time Senior Office Assistant, hired on a contract basis, who was promoted from a 'wages' position in 1983. A complete listing of the staff in the Government Members' Office is on Page 2.

In 1984, we are anticipating the number of project secretaries on staff will remain at the same level as 1983. The present ratio of 2.6 secretaries to 1 M.L.A. appears to be effective on a year-round basis, when additional temporary staff are hired during Sittings.

We continued to maintain a very low secretarial staff turnover rate in 1983, likely due in part to the economic climate in Alberta, although, historically, the turnover rate in the Government Members' Office between elections has always been low. Only four secretaries left in 1983 - one was promoted to Administrative Officer to the A.D.M. of Social Services and Community Health; one was promoted to Secretary to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources; one was promoted to Executive Assistant to the Chairman of A.A.D.A.C., and one secretary resigned when her husband was transferred out of Edmonton.

Although there are no specific opportunities for advancement within the Government Members' Office itself, in past years our secretaries have been actively recruited by Ministers' Offices. At present, six of our former secretaries are working in Ministers' Offices, which is testimony to the high calibre of our staff. As well, seven of our present secretaries worked in Ministers' Offices prior to joining us, and three secretaries have had other provincial government experience.

We were fortunate to be able to call on the services of former full-time secretarial staff to work on a part-time basis when our

regular staff were absent, or when the workload necessitated hiring additional staff. Their previous experience with us is a great asset, ensuring the smooth and uninterrupted production of M.L.A.s' work. At this time, their assistance is gratefully acknowledged.

There are obvious problems associated with the M.L.A.s and staff being located in two different buildings, not the least of which is the actual distance involved. This is especially of concern during Sittings of the Legislature, when greater and more frequent contact is required between personnel in the Legislature Building and the Legislature Annex.

In an attempt to alleviate this problem, an additional office assistant was hired for the duration of the Fall Sitting, to work exclusively for staff on the 7th Floor of the Annex. Her assistance definitely relieved some of the workload previously assumed by the secretaries in that area, and helped ensure prompt delivery of messages, etc. to the M.L.A.s. In addition, a former permanent secretary was hired for the Fall Sitting to assist the secretaries on the 7th Floor of the Annex with the increased workload generated by the Sitting.

Both of these measures appear to have been successful, and will be continued for the 1984 Spring and Fall Sittings. In addition, the relocation of the Administration Office of the Legislative Assembly to the Legislature Annex will result in the need for an additional 'runner' between that office and the personnel located in the Legislature Building. In an effort to minimize costs, the Government Members' Office will share the cost of a 'runner' in 1984, who will be available to run errands between the two buildings.

Constituents' demands for information and assistance continued to increase in 1983, resulting in greater workloads for our

secretaries. Also, as M.L.A.s newly-elected in the November, 1982 provincial election became more familiar with both their role in the legislative process and the support services available to them, the demands placed on their secretaries increased proportionately. The growth of constituency offices in 1983 also resulted in the requirement for our secretaries to maintain a liaison between the M.L.A.s, their constituency office staff, and the offices here in Edmonton.

The installation of word processing equipment in 1983, although minimal at present, has proved to be an asset in assisting the secretaries with the more routine aspects of their workloads.

By the end of 1983, secretarial staff had completed a two-day, outside training course in the operation of the word processing equipment. It is anticipated that as staff become more familiar with the equipment and its capabilities, its use will increase.

Use of computers and word processors in Members' constituency offices became a reality in 1983, and it is expected to become more prevalent in 1984, with the possibility that some of our secretaries may acquire terminals to enable direct communication with their Members' constituency offices, via a telecommunications hookup. The potential is certainly there.

In addition to word processor training, several staff members took advantage of various courses offered by the Alberta Government to upgrade their skills.

Margaret V. Pratt
Administrative Officer

RESEARCH BRANCH REVIEW

SERVICES PROVIDED

The services provided by the Research Branch are determined largely by individual Government Members. In the past, research requests have fallen into three broad categories:

- Legislative-related research (preparation of files on Private Members' Bills and Motions, research and administrative assistance to Members on Caucus Committees);
- Constituency-related research (preparation of responses to constituents' enquiries, draft newsletters, draft correspondence, draft speeches);
- Information-gathering and other services (research on topics of interest to particular Members, preparation of draft speeches, provision of newsclipping and general information services).

STAFFING

Government Caucus research assistance was first offered to Members eight years ago. Following the 1975 general election, a single researcher was hired to perform research for all non-Cabinet, Government Members. By 1979, six persons were working in a research capacity. Currently, there are eight researchers, one Administrator, and one secretary working in the Research Branch. The gradual increase in research personnel was prompted by a proliferation in the variety and number of research requests being made.

Turnover has been high in past years in the Research Branch .

Part of this turnover was attributed to the lack of advancement opportunities for researchers within the Branch itself, and part due to the low salaries offered. A new wage scale was introduced in 1983, providing salary rates comparable to those available to research personnel in provincial government departments with similar levels of education and experience.

One research position, and the Administrator position, became vacant in 1983. Currently, all positions are filled. Turnover is expected to be lower in 1984, due primarily to a lack of alternative employment opportunities.

There is a good mix of experienced and new staff in the Research Branch. Three researchers each have over three years of service with the Branch; two have over two years of service, and the remaining three have less than two years. All researchers have a minimum of a B.A. degree.

ALLOCATION OF RESEARCH TIME

Two graphs are attached. The first graph (Page 8) shows the distribution of research time between constituency-related, legislative-related, and information gathering (and other) requests for 1983.

The second graph (Page 9) shows the monthly distribution of research time.

It should be noted that neither graph includes non-research activities (e.g. time spent on administration, training, meetings, vacations, holidays, sick days, and non-Member requested research).

FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

Three key result areas have been identified for the Research Branch for 1984:

CHART ONE

1983 DISTRIBUTION OF RESEARCH TIME

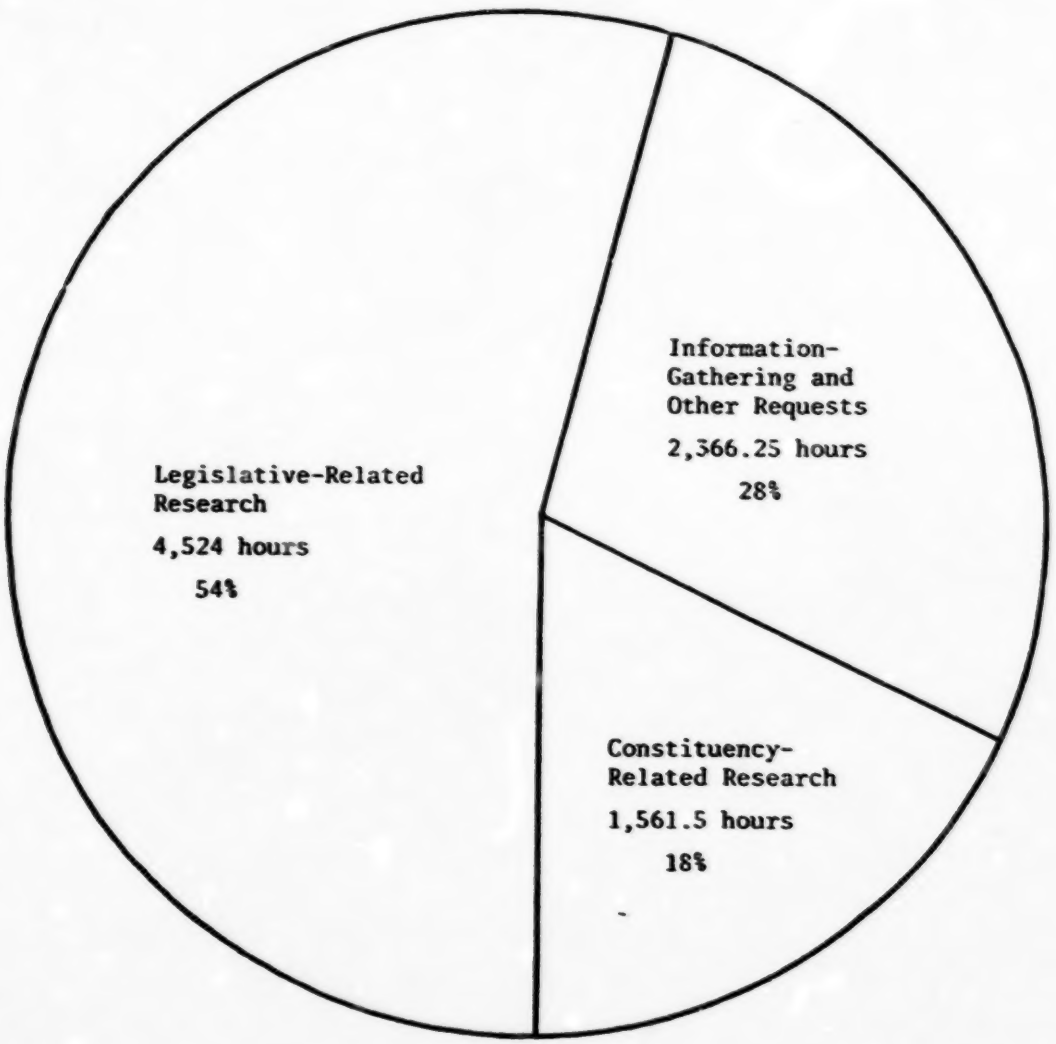
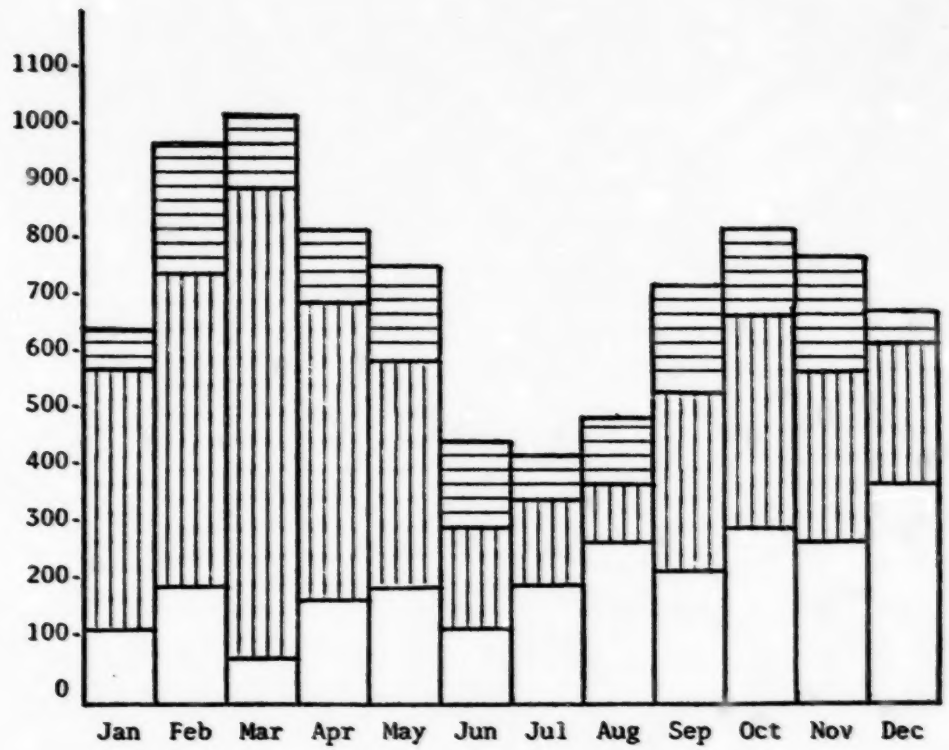


CHART TWO

1983 MONTHLY ALLOCATION OF RESEARCH TIME



Constituency-related Requests

Legislative-related Requests

Information-gathering & Other Requests

TABLE ONE

1983 HOURLY ALLOCATION OF RESEARCH TIME

	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
Constituency Requests	46.25	209.25	108.0	136.25	172.0	131.0	72.5	102.5	170.0	171.25	192.0	50.5
Legislative Requests	472.75	551.5	831.0	548.0	399.25	182.25	155.5	126.0	324.5	382.5	321.25	229.5
Information Gathering & Other Requests	115.5	187.0	64.5	145.0	181.5	112.0	187.5	251.0	207.75	284.0	258.0	372.5
TOTAL	634.5	947.75	1003.5	829.25	752.75	425.25	415.5	479.5	702.25	837.75	771.25	652.5

TOTAL HOURS: 8,451.75

1. Continuing to provide the types, levels, and quality of research services the Private Government Members want and need.

2. Co-operating with government restraint objectives.

3. Maintaining sound and equitable employee relations.

Success in these areas is largely dependent on maintaining the co-operative and positive attitudes Members and staff have demonstrated in the past. As well, a number of specific initiatives will be undertaken in 1984:

SHORT TERM

1. Greater co-ordination between the different research groups (Legislative Interns, Legislature Library Research Section, and Government Members' Research Branch) in meeting Members' requests for assistance.

LONG TERM

1. Review of the structure and staffing of the Research Branch (i.e. providing 'specialist' vs. 'generalist' services).

2. Examination of the benefits and costs of a greater utilization of electronic office technologies in research activities.

Don Watson
Administrator

FINANCIAL REVIEW

In addition to her duties as Administrator of the Secretarial Branch, the Administrative Officer also assumes day-to-day control of the budget for the Government Members' Office, and attends monthly meetings of the Estimates Committee of the Legislative Assembly, chaired by the Clerk Assistant.

Preparation of the 1984-85 Budget Estimates commenced in July, 1983, and were approved by the Special Select Standing Committee on Members' Services on October 26, 1983. Special attention was given to adhering to the spirit and intent of the government's restraint programme, resulting in an increase for the 1984-85 fiscal year of only approximately one (1%) percent over the 1983-84 Estimates.

It is not anticipated that services provided to the Private Government Members will be unduly affected by the cost-cutting measures introduced for 1984-85.

The Financial Statement (page 13) shows the actual expenditures in the 1982 calendar year (January to December inclusive) and the 1983 calendar year (J uary to December inclusive).

Margaret V. Pratt
Administrative Officer

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

DETAILS OF EXPENDITURES	1982	1983
MANPOWER		
SALARIES, PERMANENT	$ 45,113.70	$ 42,031.05
SALARIES, NON-PERMANENT	291,481.05	375,305.72
WAGES	29,053.50	33,548.54
CONTRACT EMPLOYEES	185,212.06	197,806.37
EMPLOYER CONTRIBUTIONS	39,257.36	49,286.99
ALLOWANCES/BENEFITS	2,635.00	4,425.00
A. MANPOWER TOTAL	$592,752.67	$702,403.67
SUPPLIES & SERVICES		
TRAVEL EXPENSES	$ 4,886.41	$ 2,428.70
FREIGHT & POSTAGE	130.25	491.10
RENTAL OF EQUIPMENT	11,239.00	15,726.13
TELEPHONE & COMMUNICATIONS	646.48	53.10
EQUIPMENT REPAIRS & MAINT.	1,061.00	5,532.15
PROF. TECH. & LABOUR SERVICES	4,502.54	396.66
MATERIALS & SUPPLIES	13,766.36	14,612.37
B. SUPPLIES & SERVICES TOTAL	$ 36,232.04	$ 39,240.21
PURCHASE OF FIXED ASSETS		
OFFICE EQUIPMENT	$ 10,369.90	$ 1,821.44
C. FIXED ASSETS TOTAL	$ 10,369.90	$ 1,821.44
TOTAL EXPENDITURE (A, B, C)	$639,354.61	$743,465.32

NOTE The above figures are based on calendar year expenditures and not fiscal year expenditures

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Government Members' Office wishes to acknowledge with gratitude the assistance and advice given by staff of the Legislative Assembly Office, and also the willing help of staff in other branches of the Legislative Assembly. Thanks are also due to staff in Executive Council offices, whose co-operation is appreciated. The assistance of Mr. W. Kreibom and his staff, Alberta Public Works, Supply and Services, is also acknowledged with gratitude.

The Administrative Officers wish to thank the Deputy Speaker and the Party Whip for their support and willingness to offer suggestions and advice, the Private Government Members for their co-operation, the Director of Administration of the Legislative Assembly Office for her assistance in many areas, and last, but by no means least, the staff of the Government Members' Office for their hard work, loyalty, and fellowship.

Margaret V. Pratt
Administrative Officer

Don Watson
Administrator